

# JOHN MURRAY MURDOCH AND HIS WIVES, ANN STEELE AND ISABELLA CROWFORD

John Murray Murdoch was born December 28, 1821, in Gaswater Ayrshire, Scotland, son of James and Mary Murray Murdoch. When he was 10 years old his father lost his life when he entered a gas-filled mine to rescue a fellow worker, thus leaving the mother with seven children to support. At an early age, John went to work as a shepherd boy, roaming the purple heathery hills of his homeland.

He met Ann Steele, a Scotch lassie living at Kirkconnell, a nearby village. A pleasant courtship ensued and they were married February 24, 1848. Shortly after their marriage, James Steele, a brother of

444



Ann's, came to visit them and told of a new religion he had joined while in England known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His testimony impressed them so much that two years later, when the two Mormon missionaries came to their home, they were soon converted and were baptized November 29, 1850. After embracing this strange new religion, their kinfolk and friends turned against them and they longed to emigrate to Zion.

Brigham Young had asked Franklin D. Richards to send two Scotch shepherds to Utah. He contacted John, and shortly after, John, with his wife and two children, set sail on the ship "Kennebec." The ship sailed from Liverpool, England, January 1, 1852. They always felt it was through the hand of Providence that this opportunity to get to Utah came to them.

After a dangerous voyage of nine weeks, they arrived in New Orleans. There they chartered a steamboat up the Mississippi River. A 10-day delay on a sandbar decreased their food rations to a dangerously low level, and their two sweet children, because of undernourishment, were taken very ill and died. A month later this weary, childless couple were blessed with a baby girl. When the baby was but 10 days old they began their trek across the plains.

445

Many weeks of hardships and trials brought them to the promised valley. They came with the Abraham Smoot company, Brigham Young and others, accompanied by Pitt's Brass Band, gave the weary travelers a hearty welcome. Permission was granted them to stay in the fort until a cabin could be built.

With undaunted faith and courage, this young couple gradually gathered a little around them. After living in Salt Lake Valley for eight years they loaded all their possessions into a wagon pulled by teams and, with their four little daughters, moved to upper Provo Valley, now known as Heber Valley. This was in the spring of 1860. They lived in the fort and their first home was a dugout. That fall, on November 7, another little girl came to bless their home.

It covers a long story to say that they did their part, and did it well in every enterprise in Wasatch County.

On August 8, 1862, John took as his plural wife a beautiful dark-eyed Scotch lass by the name of Isabella Crowford, a native of Blantyre, Scotland. As a young woman, she emigrated to America and worked in the cotton mills at Holyoke, Massachusetts, to get money to come to Utah. She, too, had left her loved ones and her all for the Gospel's sake. She never saw or heard of her family again after being driven from her home when she joined the Church.

Isabella proved to be a kind and faithful wife and was the mother of seven children. Ann was the mother of 15 children, making a family of 22. Fifteen grew to maturity in this valley. One member of this family, James C. Murdoch, who observed his ninetieth birthday February 11, 1959, and his faithful wife, Sarah Giles, are still with us, beloved and respected pioneers of our valley.

John M. Murdoch was the first recorder of Wasatch County. He was second counselor to William Wall, the first presiding Elder of the valley. He was captain in the Blackhawk War, president of the High Priests' Quorum, and in 1899 was ordained a Patriarch of Wasatch Stake. He was noted for his kind, comforting words and actions to those in need. He lived long and well, and at the age of 90 passed away

beloved and honored. Each of his wives lived to be 80 years of age and, like their honored husband, was loved by everyone.